

The Random Jottings of Donald Jay from Nelson in Pendle.

It was cold December day in 1909 when, a 28-year-old retired naval stoker traipsed into Burnley police station. The man was Joseph Wren and he was about to tell police that he had murdered a three-year-old boy, before abandoning the brutalised corpse, alone, near the town's famous Queen's Park. Wren led police officers to a field between the park and the Bank Hall Colliery, an old coal mine that is now the site of Bank Hall Park. On his way to the body Wren said very little, uttering just a single sentence as he took officers to the scene of the horrific crime: "I do not know what made me do it." exp-player-logo Elon Musk Is The World's Richest Man Again In the navy Joseph William Wren was born in December 1880 in Whinfell, Cockermouth, Cumbria, and would later move 50 miles down the road to Dalton-in-Furness. He was the youngest of four in 1881, according to that year's census, with his older brothers John, Thomas and Isaac dominating the Wren household, alongside his mother Mary Ann and his father Isaac senior.

Growing up, Joseph Wren was a quiet and reserved child. He had a fascination with machinery and technology, often spending hours tinkering with various mechanical objects. As he grew older, his passion led him to join the Royal Navy as a stoker. Serving on board naval vessels, Wren became skilled at operating and maintaining the boilers and engines that powered the ships.

After years of service, Joseph Wren retired from the navy at the age of 28, seeking a quieter life away from the rigors of military discipline. He settled in Burnley, a small town in Lancashire, England, hoping to find solace and a fresh start.

However, something dark seemed to dwell within Joseph. As the winter days grew colder, his mind became haunted by disturbing thoughts. On that fateful December day in 1909, overwhelmed by an inexplicable impulse, Wren walked into Burnley police station and confessed to a heinous crime.

The officers were taken aback by Wren's confession. They listened intently as he described the brutal murder of a three-year-old boy and the abandonment of the lifeless body near Queen's Park. With a mix of shock and disbelief, they followed him as he led the way to the field where the crime had occurred.

Wren's demeanor remained stoic and distant as they reached the grisly scene. The officers surveyed the area, their hearts heavy with sorrow and anger. It was a harrowing sight, a tragic reminder of the depths of human darkness.

Questioned about his motives, Joseph Wren could only offer a perplexed response, repeating, "I do not know what made me do it." The phrase echoed through the minds of those who heard it, an unsettling testament to the enigma that lay within Wren's troubled soul.

The subsequent investigation revealed that Wren had no previous criminal record, and no connection to the victim or his family. It seemed to be a random act of violence, driven by an inexplicable impulse that consumed Wren's conscience.

As news of the horrific crime spread throughout Burnley, the townspeople were gripped by fear and disbelief. They struggled to comprehend how such darkness could manifest within their seemingly quiet and unassuming neighbor.

Joseph Wren was charged with murder, and the town awaited the trial with a mix of anticipation and dread. The courtroom was filled with tension as the evidence was presented, painting a chilling picture of the crime committed by a man who had once served his country.

Wren's defense attorney argued that he suffered from a mental disorder, pleading for leniency on the grounds of diminished responsibility. The prosecution, however, painted a picture of a calculated and malicious act, urging the jury to deliver justice for the innocent life that had been

cruelly taken away.

After careful deliberation, the jury returned with a verdict. Joseph Wren was found guilty of murder and was sentenced to life imprisonment. The courtroom was filled with a palpable mix of relief and sorrow as justice was served.

Years turned into decades, and Joseph Wren remained behind bars, haunted by the memory of his horrific act. He never fully comprehended what had driven him to commit such a heinous crime, nor did he find solace in the years that passed.

As time went on, the town of Burnley gradually healed from the wounds inflicted by that cold December day. The memory of the tragic event lingered, serving as a reminder of the darkness that can reside within even the most unsuspecting individuals.

In the end, Joseph Wren's story remained one of inexplicable horror, forever etched into the history of Burnley—a chilling reminder that evil can exist in the most unexpected places, leaving scars that never truly fade away.

By Donald Jay